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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN COUNCIL AFRICA TASK FORCE COMMITS TO  
FURTHER ENGAGEMENT IN DRC, SUDAN, CHAD, HORN OF AFRICA

Classified By: USEU POLMINCOUNS LEE LITZENBERGER  
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

(U) SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer met with European Council Africa Task Force representatives on January 26 on a stop-over en route to Washington. EU Africa Task Force Head Koen Vervaeke and EU Africa specialist Jean-Christophe Belliard provided European Council views and discussions ensued on recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Eritrea. This meeting was held separately from a meeting on the same topics with European Commission Development representatives. The latter is covered septel. END SUMMARY.

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)  
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1. (C) Vervaeke initiated the discussion by noting the European Union (EU) had received a letter from the UN, requesting EU support for a flexible "rapid reaction" force to assist, if needed, to ensure electoral stability in DRC. Vervaeke indicated the UN request lacked specificity, but that the EU would explore options. He stated the EU would soon send a political/military fact-finding team to the DRC in order to best assess possible EU support. The team planned to travel only to Kinshasa and would meet with representatives of the DRC. Vervaeke stated EU High Representative Solana contacted DRC President Kabila in order to apprise him of the planned assessment and to assure him of EU intent to work cooperatively with the government.

2. (C) Vervaeke said that if there was no agreement on DRC's electoral law by February -- when Parliament resumes -- it would be difficult to hold timely elections. He added the need for international pressure in order to maintain the pace of the legislative and presidential elections, planned for March and June, respectively. Vervaeke expressed concerns about eastern Congo, including North Kivu and Kivu, and recommended a close watch on developments. He assessed that the post-election transition period -- whatever the election outcome -- would necessitate a strong U.S. profile in the Tripartite Plus One (DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi) Process.

3. (C) Assistant Secretary (A/S) Frazer noted that Burundi was planning to organize a conference, but timing was not clear. She forecast that training the Congolese police force would require a long-term strategy. Vervaeke noted that the UN Organizing Mission in the DRC (MONUC) required assistance and that it was critical that there be no interference from the Tripartite countries in DRC elections -- but the need for a gradual, phase out with specific benchmarks. Vervaeke indicated he planned to soon travel to meet with UN representatives in New York with the aim of identifying specific political and military objectives of any EU-assisted effort and that he would communicate to the U.S. his assessment.

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Sudan  
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4. (C) A/S Frazer mentioned the transition of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to a UN "blue hat" force and suggested options during the interim (next 6 to 9 months) period. She recommended that the UN begin addressing re-tooling and consider NATO support in light of its past support in providing airlifts for AMIS. Frazer noted France is concerned about NATO "globalization" and asked the nature of perceived institutional rivalry between the EU and NATO.

5. (C) Vervaeke and Belliard hinted that the Government of Sudan (GOS) might use the use of NATO assets as a rallying cry of sorts -- "if you want to bring the terrorists, bring NATO." Vervaeke emphasized that AMIS must be consulted and its sensitivities considered. It is clear, he said, that Africa wants to maintain a presence. Vervaeke stated the EU is committed to continued support in Sudan and that complementary strategies should be explored.

6. (C) A/S Frazer expressed pessimism on the current state of peace talks in Abuja as Sudanese political alliances are quite fluid. Vervaeke noted HiRep Solana, in a recent meeting with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick,

advocated a U.S.-EU common approach in the Abuja Peace Talks. He questioned what could be done to get the process moved further along.

17. (C) Belliard offered that he was not optimistic the Abuja Peace Talks would be successful due to political rivalries within Sudan. He raised the issue of whether Chad's internal situation complicated the Sudanese peace talks. Noting that Chad cannot "fight the World Bank and Sudan" at the same time, Belliard predicted negative implications for peace in Sudan if Chadian President Idriss Deby should be severely weakened or lose power. A/S Frazer questioned whether France has the current capacity to place troops on the Chad-Sudan border. Belliard responded that the U.S. should consider directly approaching France on this issue.

18. (C) Vervaeke added that given Chad's role in transition to peace in Sudan, something must be done to help with the ceasefire arrangement.

19. (C) A/S Frazer strongly encouraged EU support for Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) training as it faces fundamental challenges, including its leadership, in order to build party structures. Funds for "quick impact" training to build a sense of confidence within the SPLM could go far, she assessed.

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Cote d'Ivoire  
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10. (C) Vervaeke noted that EU HiRep Solana requested he participate in the International Working Group (IWG) on Cote d'Ivoire and expressed concern about recent events, which forecast a "long, uphill battle." Vervaeke surmised the events demonstrated the power struggle between Ivorian President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Banny with the added "nuisance capacity" of cocoa production. He noted the difficulty for the Prime Minister to properly function in the absence of media access/level of control. Vervaeke concluded that without a climate of trust, peace would not occur. He added that the IWG was under pressure to maintain a hard line, consistent with the UNSC, and highlighted that sanctions may be a necessary next step.

11. (C) Belliard indicated that one optimistic sign was the fact that the overall Ivorian population appears fed up with the political disruption and opined that less of the general population is involved in disturbances in the country -- a favorable sign. He wondered if South Africa could be more helpful in resolving the crisis.

12. (C) In response to Frazer's question regarding Nigerian President Obasanjo's role, Vervaeke responded that he was not helpful given his position on the IWG. He noted possible changes with new African Union (AU) leadership and the need to take a closer look at Angola's interest in Cote d'Ivoire, especially given Angolan support for Gbagbo. Vervaeke noted the importance of having the next IWG meeting be a success and believes European Commissioner Louis Michel may personally participate.

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Eritrea and Ethiopia: A Visit to the Disputed Border  
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13. (C) A/S Frazer recapped her recent visit to Ethiopia and to the disputed border at Badme. She noted the situation as difficult and commented that both Eritrea and Ethiopia must be flexible. She added that perhaps an UNMEE observer mission to facilitate demarcation is necessary and that the Algiers witnesses should remain consistent in their approach to a resolution. Frazer also recommended that UNSYG Annan be consulted. Frazer indicated she hoped the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) could convene in March. Belliard responded that the report of Elections Observer Ana Gomes, which was critical of the Ethiopian electoral process, would not be "published soon."

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Somalia  
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14. (C) Vervaeke indicated the EU will "step up" support for the Aden Declaration for National Reconciliation, consummated in Yemen weeks ago. Belliard added that Scandinavian countries, Italy, and Germany were outspoken in support of the declaration and that the AU had asked the EU to lift the arms embargo on Somalia. Belliard indicated the EU was assessing what technically could be done to help with a security plan, which might include an integrated police concept and security sector reform. Approximately 15 million Euros could be made available to help with security sector reform, although the details on specific allocation remain to be discussed, according to Vervaeke. (COMMENT: Belliard previously indicated to USEU that the EU had an interest in

moving more aggressively in committing political and financial support to Somalia Prime Minister Gedi's efforts in Jowhar, citing that the longer the international community waits to become more involved, the greater the risk Somalia will become a haven for Islamic extremism. See USEU Today 01-05-2006. END COMMENT.)

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Comment  
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15. (C) Subsequent to the meeting with A/S Frazer, an EU political/military assessment team departed Brussels on January 29 for DRC in order to assess the UN request for EU assistance to ensure stability in DRC during and after elections. Results of that mission along with Vervaeke's consultations with UN representatives in New York (planned for February 2-5) will provide a basis for briefing EU member states prior to an official EU response (see USEU Today 01-27-2006).

16. (U) Participants:  
United States

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Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs  
Kendra Gaither, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary  
Margaret B. Diop, USEU Political Officer

European Council

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Koen Vervaeke, Head of Africa Task Force  
Jean-Christophe Belliard, Africa Specialist

17. (U) Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer has cleared on this cable.

GRAY

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